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THE ROMAN ECONOMY: TRADE IN ASIA MINOR AND THE NICHE MARKET*

By BARBARA LEVICK

The Scale of Trade

Cicero was already claiming in 66 BC, of course before the annexation of Syria, that Asia easily exceeded all other regions in her exports;¹ in AD 66, according to Josephus, Gaul was ‘flooding the world with her goods’.² Both authors had points to make, but we do not hear of them being contradicted by critics.

In spite of such claims, influential opinion has favoured only a modest place for trade in the economy, or economies, of the Roman Empire. Few would quantify it at the low 5% of tax production advocated by A. H. M. Jones a generation ago,³ but scepticism about a large-scale economy has been expressed by R. Duncan-Jones,⁴ who likewise finds long-distance trade problematical and prefers a ‘cellular’ analysis of economic activity. Nor will many scholars accept much expansion under the Empire: P. Garnsey and R. Saller allow only a modest one from Augustus onwards, based on the Augustan peace. In particular, the East had already been urbanized and there was no significant spread of cities there.⁵

One problem of all discussion about trade levels and their significance is that writers are justifiably chary of quantifying what they say. Every claim must be relative. Jones was brave to utter a figure at all. Was there large-scale trade? Was there a ‘Roman’ economy, an economy of the

* I am much indebted to Ms T. D. Clay for help in the preparation of this paper. It was a privilege in 1999 to have to the opportunity of reading a version of it at Rikkyo University, Japan, under the chairmanship of Prof. Satoshi Urano; it benefited from the help of other Japanese scholars who were present, notably Prof. Mariko Sakurai, and more recently from the advice of Prof. Fabio Favarsani, Federal University of Ouro Preto, and Senhor Fabio Duarte Joly, University of São Paulo, Brazil, and from that of the editorial committee.

¹ Cic., *Pro Lege Man.* 14.

² Jos., *Bell. Jud.* 2. 372.

³ A. H. M. Jones, *The Roman Economy. Studies in Ancient economic and administrative History*, ed. P. A. Brunt (Oxford, 1974), 36.

⁴ R. P. Duncan-Jones, *Structure and Scale in the Roman Economy* (Cambridge, 1990), 39 ff.

⁵ P. A. Garnsey and R. Saller, *The Roman Empire: Economy, Society, and Culture* (London, 1987), 51 f., 58.

Empire? What does the concept mean? These interrelated questions are too important to be ignored. However tentatively, one has to take up a position. Recently some scholars have been willing to allow trade a greater rôle,⁶ in what I am still inclined to call a large-scale economy, though one tempered, like the contemporary Euro-economy, by geography and history. My answer would be affirmative in both cases, partly because government and the army created a network that had an economic dimension and economic consequences. It was a fragile network: one part could flourish while others declined, as can happen in modern countries of any size: south and north-east in mid-twentieth-century Britain, for example, with each community having its own economic catchment area and microclimate, resembling its neighbours and differing from them in any number of ways.⁷ And, although one might well ponder on the speedy return of the centrally placed Remi to the Roman fold during the Gallic revolt of 69–70,⁸ a province could break off from the Empire without fatal results to either part: the Empire was certainly not a closed system.

The cases of Gaul and Asia Minor

In support of this point of view, it is worth looking at Asia Minor's exceptionally high profile in trade, comparable with that of Gaul. It is significant, not in a quantifiable way, but in determining the level of urbanization in Asia Minor and in sustaining it. Gaul and Asia Minor were not the only areas that were significant in trade. Without putting too much faith in Strabo's tendentious claims that Britain if conquered would pay no more in tribute than by AD 23 it was already paying in customs dues, there must have been some plausibility in what he wrote. What the governing class was concerned with was revenue, but trade on a scale to affect that, in and out of the Empire and between regions within it, would have played a significant part in the economy.⁹

Hence in principle the tool of Keith Hopkins' model-based analysis of the Roman economy was a very welcome one when he first published it in 1980, along with the amplifications he has made to his analysis

⁶ K. Hopkins, 'Taxes and trade in the Roman Empire (200 BC-AD 400)', *JRS* 70 (1980), 101 ff.

⁷ See P. Horden and N. Purcell, *The Corrupting Sea: a study of Mediterranean History* (Oxford, 2000), 92 ff. for problems of definition.

⁸ Tac., *Hist.* 4. 67 ff.

⁹ Strabo 4. 5. 3, but excusing Augustus' failure to invade. Egypt and Gaul on annexation contributed HS 40m. to the state treasury (Vell. Pat. 2. 39. 2).

since.¹⁰ It has provided realistic parameters within which quantification can at least be envisaged. On the other hand, the concrete evidence for the view I am suggesting here is largely anecdotal, and there is thus an opportunity of supporting the value of 'anecdotal' evidence, vigorously though Hopkins himself has attacked it.¹¹ The value of it is that it often reveals unargued, even unconscious presuppositions that run along the lines of thought of the speaker or writer and emerge comparatively uncensored. Economic history is not merely about the movement of goods and money; it is about the attitudes of peoples and individuals. As Hopkins acknowledged in putting forward his own model, there is more than one way of approaching the problem. The two approaches are not 'pure', and it is premature to attack one approach simply because the other has commended itself.

The real problem with anecdotal evidence is that it is embedded in a context that has been assigned to it by someone with an agenda that is not that of the economic historian. The business man from Hierapolis in Phrygia who in the first century AD claims to have rounded Cape Malea, at the southern tip of the Greek mainland, 72 times¹² is intent on making his readers exclaim in admiration; there is no solid context in which this precise and very particular information can be placed.

A little more is known in general, however. The Anatolian peninsula as a whole had its staple and familiar exports: Greek-speaking slaves, for example, even when the wars of the Republic came to an end. There were still the *threptoi* available, children exposed by their parents and reared as slaves.¹³ Then there were specialities apparently produced on a large scale, such as linens,¹⁴ woollens,¹⁵ and marbles.¹⁶ But of course we cannot quantify their value either. Even promising fields of enquiry, such as the circulation of coinage and agreements on *Homonoia*, concord, between cities turn out, under C. Howgego's cautious guidance, to be dangerous ground: coin distribution represents merely 'the aggregate of movements of people' and *Homonoia*

¹⁰ Hopkins (n. 6); K. Hopkins, 'Rome, Taxes, Rents and Trade', *Kodai* 6 (1996-7), 41 ff.

¹¹ K. Hopkins, review of F. G. B. Millar, *The Emperor in the Roman World* (London, 1977), in *JRS* 68 (1978), 178 ff.

¹² C. Humann *et al.*, *Altertümer v. Hierapolis. Jahrb. des kais. deutschen arch. Inst. Ergänzungsheft* 4 (Berlin, 1896), 53.

¹³ B. Levick, S. Mitchell, J. Potter, M. Waelkens, the coins by D. Nash, *Monumenta Asiae Minoris Antiqua* ix: *Monuments from the Aezanitis*, recorded by C. W. M. Cox, A. Cameron, and J. Cullen. *Soc. Prom. Rom. Stud., Monographs* 4 (London, 1989), lxivff., with bibl.

¹⁴ Dio Chrys. 34. 21. 3.

¹⁵ Strabo 12. 8. 16; Pliny, *NH* 8.190; Dio Chr. 35.130.

¹⁶ Strabo 12. 8. 14.

agreements are due to 'the complex motives of the wealthy'.¹⁷ We have to estimate the performance of Asia Minor in relation to other regions by considering what factors may have been particularly favourable or unfavourable to it.

We also have to decide what we mean by 'trade' and 'traders'. By 'trade' I mean exchanging the produce of the soil, raw or processed, and slaves either for other goods or, as Strabo makes clear was normal by his day, for money. It includes selling locally produced goods in the local market by the producer. But he may employ an agent to dispose of them further afield. Or another party may buy the goods from him locally and dispose of them locally or abroad. Or goods may be brought in from outside the locality and sold in the local market for local consumption or passed on to another place, the final outlet. At Athens Hadrian ordered fishermen to sell their catch themselves, or the first people who purchased it from them:¹⁸ the resale of goods by those who are third buyers adds to prices – though, in the case of fish, presumably not for long. All these activities are entitled to be called 'trading'. But we need to distinguish local from inter-city, regional from inter-regional trade, that is, four grades of distance. As far as Asia Minor goes, in F. De Martino's classification its 'region' includes the Aegean and mainland Greece.¹⁹ The word 'trader' cannot correspondingly be applied to anyone engaged in these activities. The producer who sells his goods abroad through an agent is, typically, primarily a farmer. The Greek *emporos* according to the meaning of the word 'goes on board' with his goods. That word will not do for the local small retailer, *kapelos*. But our concern is not with words but with activity carried on from the second to the fourth grades of distance; small-scale local exchanges can be treated as permanent background static. For a realistic picture we should also take account of men who dealt in money and of the carriers who were essential for the maintenance of trade.

The geography of Asia Minor is a basic factor. As a bridge between

¹⁷ C. J. Howgego, *Greek Imperial Countermarks: Studies in the provincial Coinage of the Roman Empire*, R.N.S. Spec. Publ. 17 (London, 1985), 34, 36.

¹⁸ F. F. Abbott and A. C. Johnson, *Municipal Administration in the Roman Empire* (Princeton, 1926; repr. N.Y., 1968), 413 no. 91 (=IG 2/3. 1103).

¹⁹ F. De Martino, *Storia economica di Roma antica* (2 vols., Florence, 1979), 327. To take British Museum lamps as an example (D. M. Bailey, *A Catalogue of Lamps in the British Museum*. iii. *Roman provincial Lamps* [London, 1988]), no lamps found elsewhere came from Sardes, while those of Tarsus were reaching Cyprus in the second century, and Ephesus exported to Sardes, the Bosphoran kingdom, Berytus and Jerash in Syria, to Athens, central Italy, and Carthage. A more nuanced picture of divisions is given by Horden and Purcell (n. 7), 343: the Mediterranean world is 'a vast conglomeration of tiny sub-regions and larger groups of sub-regions'. They go on to discuss the movement of various commodities (344 ff.).

East and West it has been under the control of a single power, or in contention between two powers, from the time when it fell under the virtual control of the Romans at the battle of Magnesia in 190 BC. Whatever the details of the line taken by famous routes from the Persian Royal Road onwards their main east-west direction is clear enough, and the differences of culture and economy on either side of the political boundary were an incentive to trade.

This is not to claim that vast quantities of exotica came through Asia Minor. Their main points of entry were in Syria and Egypt.²⁰ But in fourth-century Persian Armenia Artaxata was appointed a staging post, so there must then have been northern routes as well.²¹ And Asia Minor did benefit from her coastal routes, as eastern imports were carried west from the Levant. The existence of a fair in the fifth century at Aegeae points to that.²² This was where western shippers to Italy and Africa might find their far-eastern goods.

The importance of diversity

Much more important was the economic and cultural diversity set up by nature and history within a single peninsula which was nonetheless criss-crossed by major routes. The north and south coasts, and the west, the Roman province of Asia, were richly endowed; only the interior of Caria can be fingered as less productive.²³ The timber-clad heights of the Taurus and the central plateau with its harsh climate, favouring herding, were a different matter. Variety encouraged inter-provincial trade, and that provided a springboard for the inter-regional movement of goods.

The sea was another vital factor:²⁴ the furthest point in Anatolia from it is only about 280 km., on the Euphrates bend south of Melitene, closely run by a spot north-east of the Great Salt Lake (Tatta Göl). A town in Gaul on a tributary of the Rhône could outdo this, at nearly 500 km. from the sea, but it would have the Rhine, the Rhône, or their tributaries, for transport. Gregory of Nazianzus contrasts what famine

²⁰ Jones (n. 3), 56; F. G. B. Millar, 'Caravan Cities: the Roman Near East and long distance Trade by land', in M. Austin *et al.* (eds.), *Modus Operandi: Essays in Honour of Geoffrey Rickman*. Inst. of Class. Stud., School of Advanced Stud. (London, 1998), 119 ff.

²¹ Jones (n. 3), 142.

²² Theodoret, *Ep.* 70 (c. AD 443–8); *Jerusalem Itinerary*, *Theodosius* 32, cited by Jones (n. 3), 39.

²³ C. Delplace, 'Publicains, trafiquants et financiers dans les provinces d'Asie Mineure sous la République', *Ktèma* 2 (1977), 233 ff. at 233.

²⁴ See Horden and Purcell (n. 7), 23: 'The most basic and most vital lines of communication lay across the sea.'

meant for those on the sea coast and inland peoples.²⁵ And round the deeply indented coast were excellent harbours.²⁶ Asia Minor had few navigable rivers, though the valleys carried roads such as the one followed by St. Paul when he went up-country from Pamphylia into Pisidia. Pliny's letter to Trajan requesting permission for a canal from Lake Sophon to Nicomedia, to carry marble, grain, and timber, at once highlights the transport problem and the importance of the trade that was to be facilitated.²⁷ Prusias ad Hypium nearby was luckier: the river appears on coins carrying a shrub in token of the timber floated down it to the city's *emporion* on the coast and then carried over the Black Sea by Prusian *emporoi*.²⁸

Cities on the coast benefited from cabotage, that is, piecemeal coastal navigation and trade, though it might be hindered by outbreaks among tribes on the shore, as in Rough Cilicia in AD 52.²⁹ When St. Paul set out for Rome from Palestine, he was 'meaning to sail by the coasts of Asia'.³⁰ In Diocletian's *Price Edict* the routes from Nicomedia to Ephesus and Pamphylia were thought worth costing, and they have left traces in the countermarks of a few Greek imperial coins.³¹ The existence of these routes does something, as far as Asia Minor is concerned, to obviate the problem of transport costs as an obstacle to trade on the ancient economy, rightly stressed by Jones.³² Strabo claims that Ephesus, the biggest city north-west of the Taurus range, acquired most of its wealth from its harbour.³³ Certainly little Myra in Lycia attached importance to income from its harbour dues;³⁴ and Cyzicus near the meeting of Europe and Asia, Black Sea and Aegean, had no fewer than two hundred ship-sheds.³⁵

Another natural factor in the development of trade is the uncertainty and diversity of the 'Mediterranean climate'.³⁶ Diversity of detail in his world was something that Strabo emphasized,³⁷ and as the Younger

²⁵ Gregory of Nazianzus, *Discourse* 43. 34 (AD 382): *paraliai, epeirotai*.

²⁶ For harbours and harbourlessness, see Horden and Purcell (n. 7), 391 ff.

²⁷ Pliny, *Ep.* 10. 41.

²⁸ L. Robert, *A travers l'Asie Mineure. BÉFAR* 239 (Paris, 1980), 86 f., citing F. Imhoof-Blumer, *Fluss- und Meergötter auf griech. und röm. Münzen: Personifikation der Gewässer* (Geneva, 1924, repr. from *Rev. Suisse de Num.* 23 [1913], 173–421), nos. 232 and 234 (so *Brit. Mus. Cat. of Gr. Coins, Pontus, etc.*, 201 no. 2).

²⁹ Tac., *Ann.* 12. 55.

³¹ Howgego (n. 17), 51.

³³ Strabo 14. 1. 24.

³⁵ Strabo 12. 8. 11.

³⁶ Garnsey and Saller (n. 5), 6; P. A. Garnsey, *Famine and Food Supply in the Graeco-Roman world: Responses to Risk and Crisis* (Cambridge, 1988), 8 f.

³⁷ Strabo 2. 5. 17. Correspondingly Horden and Purcell (n. 7), 49: 'The dynamics and flux of social allegiances and ordered behaviour . . . will defy scientific modelling'.

³⁰ *Acts of the Apostles* 27. 2.

³² Jones (n. 3), 37.

³⁴ *OGIS* 572.

Pliny stressed in his *Panegyric*, offered to Trajan in AD 100, Heaven was never so beneficent as to feed all parts of the Roman world at once.³⁸ In terms of time, this was another way of describing variation from one year to another. Hence the probability mentioned by Garnsey and Whittaker³⁹ that famine itself gave rise to trade. Why was the governor of Galatia early in Tiberius' reign so anxious to prevent private individuals making illegitimate use of the transport facilities of the city of Sagalassus unless they were intent on moving goods about by waggon, mule, or donkey, so intent that they did not mind infringing the law to make it cheaper, or cost-free?⁴⁰ An apocryphal story about St. Nicolas of Myra, also known as Father Christmas, whose life centres on the turn of the third and fourth centuries, brought back to life three young scholars thrown into a cooking pot in a time of famine;⁴¹ but the edict from Pisidian Antioch against hoarding grain and profiteering issued by a late first-century governor of Galatia is authentic evidence of the desperation that grain shortage engendered in landlocked communities.⁴² Some communities actually provided for grain distributions either regularly or during shortages, implying further movement of supplies.

The rôles of the army and of taxation

In the first century AD for governmental reasons new large permanent markets also came into being to intensify demand for staples such as wine, oil, wood, and eventually marble for tiled bathing establishments.⁴³ The Danubian provinces, notably Moesia, were established under Roman control early in the Principate. The new province of Moesia was occupied by three legions and by appropriate auxiliary troops. There were another three legions in Pannonia and Dalmatia. These troops with their dependants were the equivalent of two large

³⁸ Pliny, *Pan.* 32. 2.

³⁹ P. A. Garnsey and C. Whittaker (eds.), *Trade and Famine in Classical Antiquity. Proc. Cambridge Phil. Soc. Suppl.* 8 (1983), 2.

⁴⁰ S. Mitchell, 'Requisitioned Transport in the Roman Empire: a new Inscription from Pisidia', *JRS* 66 (1976), 106–31.

⁴¹ For St. Nicholas see G. Anrich, *Hagios Nicolaos: Der heilige Nicolaos in den griechischen Kirche: Texte und Untersuchungen* (2 vols., 1913, 1917); versions of the tale: K. Meisen, *Nicolauskulte und Nicolausbrauche in Abendlande. Eine kultgeographische-volkskundliche Untersuchungen* (Düsseldorf, 1931), 289 ff.

⁴² M. McCrum and A. G. Woodhead, *Select Docs. of the Principates of the Flavian Emperors including the Year of Revolution AD 68–96* (Cambridge, 1961), 464.

⁴³ *IGR* 1. 854.

towns or six small settlements.⁴⁴ As groups they had to be provided with official necessities, food, drink, housing, clothing, armour and weapons, and as individuals they had considerable spending power.⁴⁵

It has to be admitted that there are cogent arguments against the thesis that the army contributed to the prosperity of the Roman world.⁴⁶ 'Bad' emperors such as Domitian have destructive progresses thrown in their faces, 'good' ones like Trajan are praised for the restraint of their troops. We have abundant evidence for the suffering that even small bodies of men caused as they moved through Asia Minor. But this does not apply to permanent stations. The north-western end of Asia Minor had benefited first, then under Vespasian two more legions were stationed on the Euphrates. What the inhabitants of Cappadocia and Lesser Armenia could not supply for clothing and armaments, places further away, in Galatia, Bithynia, and Phrygia, could contribute, even without the vaunted improvements in the road system of Asia Minor under the Flavians, which were undertaken for governmental reasons. Asia Minor may have profited, as Gaul did from the presence of seven legions on the Rhine.

However inadvertently, then, the Roman government contributed to prosperity and trade by stationing troops in permanent bases in the provinces. But there is a more controversial view to consider. It was put forward by Hopkins in 1980, that Rome's exaction of taxes also stimulated trade and promoted the unification of the economy. Tax-exporting provinces such as Asia, which had no armies to absorb the cash and send it into circulation again, had to make up the shortfall by exporting goods. That view has met sharp criticism. It has been claimed that so far from stimulating trade the collection of taxes may have depressed it. Scholars have pointed out that we do not know how much tax was collected in kind.⁴⁷ In Asia Minor not only the remote Sanni of

⁴⁴ Say 5, 000 men in each of six legions, and equivalent *auxilia*, each man with (e.g.) a partner and one child: that totals 180, 000; as to purchasing power, legionaries between Domitian and Septimius Severus received *HS* 12k a year, auxiliaries perhaps five-sixths of that: 66 m. *HS* before deductions: B. Campbell, *The Emperor and the Roman Army* (Oxford, 1984), 161 f.

⁴⁵ P. Middleton, 'The Roman Army and long-distance Trade', in Garnsey and Whittaker (n. 39), 75 ff.

⁴⁶ S. Mitchell, 'The Balkans, Anatolia, and Roman armies across Asia Minor', in S. Mitchell (ed.), *Armies and Frontiers in Roman and Byzantine Anatolia. Proc. of Colloquium held at University College, Swansea, in April 1981. Brit. Inst. Arch. at Ankara Monogr. 5, Brit. Arch. Reports. Internat. Ser. 156* (Oxford, 1983), 131 ff., against E. Gren, *Kleinasien und der Ostbalkan in der wirtschaftlichen Entwicklung der röm. Kaiserzeit. Uppsala Univ. Årsskr. 1941, 9* (Uppsala, etc., 1941).

⁴⁷ P. A. Brunt, 'The Revenues of Rome', *JRS* 71 (1981), 161–72 (= *Roman Imperial Themes* [Oxford, 1990], 324–46); Garnsey and Saller (n. 5), 50; R. P. Duncan-Jones (n. 4), 191. They cite Hyg. 205L.

Pontus were mulcted of their beeswax,⁴⁸ but a fully-fledged city like Cibyra in Phrygia was paying in grain under Claudius.⁴⁹ The wax tax is informative all the same: if enough was being made for a proportion to be taken in tax, quantities must have been produced, presumably for export, otherwise the impost would not have been worth levying.

But Hopkins has responded to criticism.⁵⁰ My problem with his view is a little different: it assumes a rise in tax level under the Romans, and this rise stimulated production. Actually the Romans seem to have been conservative in their handling of taxes in provinces they inherited, such as Asia, where the customs law exhibits features taken over with the Pergamene kingdom in the later second century BC.⁵¹ It was newly conquered tribal areas like the Balkans and Britain that felt the pressure to produce and often revolted. But the movement of goods, even for tax purposes, still had financial spin-offs for free enterprise. The contractors who transported state-owned marble would have to be paid, and when the marble reached Rome private dealers like the third-century Bithynian *lithemporos*, dealer in Proconnesian marble, who had his office near the Aventine, could fix up private orders.⁵²

Even the movement of tax in kind may itself have played an indirect part in stimulating trade,⁵³ in that the infrastructure it required created facilities. The importance of this for Africa has been stressed by C. Wickham:⁵⁴ other goods could be carried in ships bound for Rome with grain; and then there was the return journey: what did the ships have for ballast? Presumably Asia Minor did not enjoy the benefit of riding piggy-back on grain ships until the foundation of Constantinople, when another story about St. Nicolas of Myra gives us a picture of the ships *en route*: they put in at his home port, where Nicolas relieved them of some of their cargo to help starving locals. (Of course they were found to be miraculously full on arrival in Constantinople.)

⁴⁸ Pliny, *NH* 21. 77.

⁴⁹ *IGR* 4. 914.

⁵⁰ Hopkins (n. 9).

⁵¹ Published by H. Engelmann and D. Knibbe, 'Das Zollgesetz der Provinz Asia. Eine neue Inschrift aus Ephesos', *Epigr. Anat.* 14 (1986); cf. H. Pleket in *SEG* 39. 367–97, no. 1180. A new edition with English translation and commentary is in preparation.

⁵² *SEG* 4. 106; cf. *IG* 14. 2247 (Interamna).

⁵³ I am indebted to Ms T. D. Clay for this point.

⁵⁴ C. Wickham, 'Marx, Sherlock Holmes, and late Roman Commerce' *JRS* 78 (1988), 183 ff.

The stigma of 'trade'

I should like to turn now from the rôle of the Roman government in trade to a factor in the debate about trade that operates both on the negative and (I think decisively) on the positive sides: the *polis*.

The impotence of traders in *polis* life is a plank in minimalist views. But in considering their status and power we need to observe the distinction between landowners who (happened to) dispose of their goods abroad on the one hand and on the other market retailers and travellers in goods. Disposal of surpluses abroad was not what gave aristocrats a stake and status in the *polis* but actual possession of the land that was at such a premium in mainland Greece, and the official positions that they held as a result in the *polis*. As Carney put it,⁵⁵ their value system was antipathetic to trade interests; custom, though not law, forbade those who dealt in *utensilia* from becoming members of city councils.⁵⁶ But H. Pleket cites Plutarch's treatise on bringing up children,⁵⁷ where Plutarch accuses his readers of entrusting their best slaves with the management of trade overseas as captains and *emporoi*, and of leaving their children to the worst; by using slave agents to supervise the disposal of their goods⁵⁸ they avoided the stigma of trade and enjoyed its profits.⁵⁹

But not all traders were reticent about their calling. Tomis on the Black Sea has produced the grave monument set up by a man to his father and brother; they were *emporoi*, citizens of Nicomedia and Aezani in north-west Asia Minor.⁶⁰ They died away from home, and their calling explains why. It is worth noting that one bore a high class Aezanitan name, Menophilus, and the other the Roman *cognomen* of Bassus.

In any case, feeling may have been very different in one community from what it was in another. There were cities that had developed beyond the norm because of the contribution of successful traders or manufacturers. They could not afford prejudice. At Tarsus actual linen

⁵⁵ T. F. Carney, *The Shape of the Past: models and Antiquity* (Lawrence, 1975), 98.

⁵⁶ *Dig.* 50. 2. 12.

⁵⁷ H. W. Pleket, 'Urban Elites and Business in the Greek part of the Roman Empire', in P. A. Garnsey *et al.* (eds.), *Trade in the Ancient Economy* (London, 1983), 131–44; the text is Plut., *De Lib. Educ.* 7.

⁵⁸ *Dig.* 40. 7. 14 pr.

⁵⁹ If slaves and freedmen who went on these errands received commemoration on a tombstone it was their place in the household, not their activities, that was commemorated.

⁶⁰ *AEMO* 8 (1884), 24, no. 62.

workers were deprived of political rights.⁶¹ But the controllers of the industry were in a different position. They were master craftsmen, and it is worth recalling the high status and Roman citizenship of Paul the tentmaker of Tarsus.⁶² The absence of such men from the epigraphic record is due merely to convention. Formal commemoration developed at a time when what mattered was a man's name, his father's name, and his place of origin.

In special circumstances a whole city became dependent on trade or manufacture. Palmyra is the supreme example, but for Asia Minor there is Corycus perched on the coast of Rough Cilicia, where land was hardly available and trade and business featured strongly in the local monuments.⁶³ At Hierapolis in Phrygia the manufacture of textiles played so important a part in the local economy that it seemed relevant to record on a man's tombstone that he was a dyer of purple and a city councillor.⁶⁴ Another calling often mentioned on stone, not surprisingly, was that of *latypos*, stonemason. It is especially significant because the producer was proud of his job and may have cut the stone himself. It was not necessarily disdain but perhaps simply perceived irrelevance that was responsible for the silence of many of the monuments. Even within cities that conformed more closely than Hierapolis and Corycus to the standard agricultural model there were professional *collegia* of men who showed a degree of confidence and self-assertion, and who were under the protection of men who were often members of local councils.⁶⁵

Collegia could be integrated into corporate city organization; Jones' enquiry into city trade revealed only one case, that of the wool and leather workers at Philadelphia in Lydia,⁶⁶ but he conceded that there might be others elsewhere. Even without civic recognition, *collegia*, as G. Horsley has pointed out,⁶⁷ would have had an effect on prices, increasing the proportion of turnover of cash in a city that was due to trading and enhancing their own importance. At Ephesus the fishermen

⁶¹ Dio Chrys. 34. 21. 2.

⁶² *Acts of the Apostles* 22. 28.

⁶³ See J. Keil and A. Wilhelm, *Monumenta Asiae Minoris Antiqua* 3 (Manchester, 1931), 131–213, nos. 200–788.

⁶⁴ C. Humann *et al.*, *Altertümer v. Hierapolis. Jahrb. des kais. deutschen arch. Inst. Ergänzungsheft* 4 (Berlin, 1898), 121, no. 156: *bouleutou, porphyropolou*.

⁶⁵ Carney's assertion (n. 55), 38, 78, 90, plausible in itself, that patrons 'encouraged' trade, is not backed up by evidence.

⁶⁶ Jones (n. 3), 45 (*IGR*. 4. 1632).

⁶⁷ G. H. R. Horsley, 'A fishing cartel in first-century Ephesos', in *New Docs. illustrating Christianity* 5 (Macquarie, 1989), 95–114.

built the customs-house and sold the fish in it; there was no other route for selling on than through the fishermen's sales point.

In the interior of Asia Minor the market may be virtually independent of any *polis* proper. In the case of Gordium in Phrygia, Strabo particularly remarks⁶⁸ that it was not much of a town, but was a notable market, while he claims that Comana Pontica was a lesser Corinth.⁶⁹ In the interior, where temples and markets went together in a profitable symbiosis, any prejudice against trade may again have been weaker as the original *polis* ethos was also diluted. And both in these communities and in *poleis* proper the religious festivals and games that proliferated in the Greek East had as much economic as religious significance. Cities where governors stopped on circuit had similar advantages: Dio Chrysostom's description of an assize centre in operation at Apamea Cibotus remarks that nothing in the city was unemployed, neither draft animals, houses, nor women.⁷⁰

Urban needs⁷¹

But the needs of the *polis* itself may be exploited on the positive side as strong evidence for considerable trade. Large cities, as the gross examples of Rome and Constantinople show, generated a need for grain that was not to be satisfied by their territories; Duncan-Jones can cite the *Athenaion Politeia*⁷² for the claim that they all have to import and export. Before Constantinople Asia Minor had nothing on the scale of Antioch in Syria or Alexandria, but even second order cities and much smaller from time to time found themselves short of grain, as we have seen.

Under the Empire Asia Minor, especially the province of Asia, was one of the most heavily urbanized regions in the entire Roman world, and the fresh development of new and old cities, which is not to be underestimated – indeed Sue Alcock writes of ‘compulsory urbanization’⁷³ – is the strongest evidence for the importance of trade in the economy of the peninsula. Certainly the rulers of the ancient world,

⁶⁸ Strabo 12. 5. 3, 12. 8. 9.

⁶⁹ Strabo 12. 3. 36.

⁷⁰ Dio Chrys. 35. 15 f.

⁷¹ For a defence of the idea of the ‘consumer city’, see Horden and Purcell (n. 7), 105 ff.

⁷² Duncan-Jones (n. 4), 32; *Ath. Pol.* 2. 3. 2; 2. 11.

⁷³ S. Alcock, ‘Archaeology and imperialism: Roman expansion and the Greek city’, *Jrnl. Medit. Arch.* 2.1 (1989), 94.

from Alexander the Great though a whole series of Roman emperors, encouraged development.

All cities without exception, with their basic requisites of government offices, gymnasium, theatre, market-place, and water-supply,⁷⁴ created a demand for metal, stone, workers, and luxury goods. Now although Aelius Aristides in the mid-second century claims that the coasts and interiors in general have been filled with cities fostered by Rome,⁷⁵ the next place he actually mentions is Ionia. The Asian Province was renowned for its city development, and a third-century anecdote speaks of 500 cities.⁷⁶ Indeed, they were beginning to join on one to another in ribbon development, if Aristides is to be believed.⁷⁷ Even if we are unwilling to accept the rhetorical figure of 500, we have to acknowledge the extraordinary number of mints that this province alone supported. These cities provided amenities, they threw up public buildings, and we know the cost of some of them. The aqueduct at Aspendus in Pamphylia, as is well known, cost 2 m. HS,⁷⁸ and the one that Nicomedia failed to complete during Pliny's governorship of Bithynia cost nearly twice that before they gave up the attempt, only to resume it under Pliny's guidance.⁷⁹ Even in the interior the prestige of the *polis* favoured material development, and their inhabitants demanded not only the amenities of Greek cities, but additional amenities that came from the West. Materials and skills had to be brought in. Some difficult areas benefited earlier than might have been expected. S. Mitchell has shown how far hellenization had gone in Pisidia even at the beginning of the first century BC.⁸⁰ Other areas such as Cappadocia and Galatia waited longer and never really caught up.

These developments had to be paid for and serviced. We cannot assume that the cost of the new amenities was derived from farming and the disposal of local products in the local market. Big landowners would be sending their produce at least outside their own city territory, and not to the community next door, where similar conditions would apply. They would be looking for an outlet where there would be a demand for their surplus. It is just at the point where western Asia Minor presents a knot of road junctions, on the borders of the provinces of Asia and Galatia, that Strabo places an *emporium* that comes second only to

⁷⁴ Paus. 10. 4. 1.

⁷⁶ Philostr., *Lives of the Sophists* 548.

⁷⁸ *IGRR* 3. 804.

⁸⁰ S. Mitchell, 'The Hellenization of Pisidia', *Mediterranean Arch.* (Sydney), 4 (1991), 119 ff.

⁷⁵ Ael. Arist., *Pan. on Rome* 94.

⁷⁷ Ael. Arist., *Pan. on Rome* 93.

⁷⁹ Pliny, *Ep.* 10. 37 f.

Ephesus, Apamea Cibotus, which we have already seen as an assize centre. Geographically this was the meeting place of East and West in Asia Minor and where their goods were exchanged. For it was not only Anatolian products that changed hands here: Apamea received the products of Italy and Greece.⁸¹

Dio of Prusa in Bithynia is a prime witness in this case. He was already called up before the people after a grain riot, to defend himself on a charge of hoarding grain. He had not hoarded grain, he protests, because he grew hardly enough for his own needs: he was practically all in wine and cattle. This was evidently a plausible defence, and one must ask why he had taken to those products in such a big way. He and his household were hardly disposing of his grape harvest with nightly drinking parties. The wine was going where there was a demand for it to the Balkans and eastern Anatolia, to soldier and civilian populations there who could afford to pay for a prestigious drink. Dio, philosopher and sophist, was not a trader but a landowner who got his agents to sell his goods abroad. His visits to south Russia and a fortress in Moesia would have put him in a position to establish contacts and set up deals; it is amusing that he specifically denies going as an *emporos*.⁸²

Specialities and niche markets

I should like to argue also that the variety of climate and terrain in Anatolia, and its division into small political units, provinces and *poleis*, which was related to geographical factors, strongly favoured the development of internal, and ultimately overseas trade by promoting specialities. There were quite mundane goods whose movements about the peninsula were significant enough to attract the attention of the tax man, like the nails mentioned on an inscription of Aphrodisias published by J. M. Reynolds, on which a tax was collected by publicans under Hadrian.⁸³ A community with a good supply of iron would be in a position to manufacture them.⁸⁴ For items to achieve only local significance they should be portable as well as distinctive. At Aezani in Phrygia in the second century AD the school of sculptors responsible for decorating the great Hadrianic temple of Zeus there supplied the local

⁸¹ Strabo 12. 8. 15; Dio Chrys. 35. 13 f.

⁸² Dio Chrys. 12. 17.

⁸³ J. M. Reynolds, *Aphrodisias and Rome. Soc. Prom. Rom. Stud., JRS Monographs* 3 (London, 1982), Doc. 15.

⁸⁴ Towns with the epithet *Sidera* (Ancyra in Phrygia, Seleucia in Pisidia), for example.

demand for funerary monuments and exported their works to neighbours thirty kilometres away. But these monuments, unlike those of Docimium and Proconnesus, were too specialized in design, mainly taking the form of the 'doorstones' characteristic of Phrygia, to overcome completely the disadvantage of their weight.⁸⁵

Specialities that I should like to make more of are such local items as bedding from Tralles,⁸⁶ or the styrax gum and iris-based ointment that came from Selge in Pisidia.⁸⁷ The unity with variety of the classical Mediterranean world and its very graduated social and economic change gave scope for refined local preoccupations, for medicinal and culinary specialities.⁸⁸ Believed in at home, they might be offered to amenable travellers, hawked abroad, or both. I instance the medicinal wine of Amblada in Pisidia.⁸⁹ Part of the citizen body of that town was named 'Ambrosia'; this may dissipate any suspicion that the medicinal reputation of the wine was cultivated merely to overcome the difficulty that it tasted foul. In general terms, then, I would suggest that the notion that trade was not important in the ancient economy does not take account of élite tastes for the unusual and exotic – and expensive – or for similar tastes, pursued as far as their resources permitted by people in strata just below the élite, those in cities just below city councillor level. A high proportion of the population was living at subsistence level, but enough were above that to be able to indulge themselves. Such tastes shade into the snobberies revealed by the notorious vogue for 'Nervian' cloaks specified in Diocletian's *Price Edict*,⁹⁰ and by the ostentation of mentioning on a monument that it is made of a specific marble.⁹¹

Small specialities such as these, named after cities or whole regions, like the coarse goat-hair rugs known already in the seventies BC as *cilicia*,⁹² rather than by the individual villages that produced them, could

⁸⁵ For the distribution of 'Doorstones', see M. Waelkens, *Die Kleinasiatische Türsteine: typolog. und epigraph. Untersuchungen der kleinasiat. Türsteine Grabreliefs mit Scheintür* (Mainz, 1986) (map).

⁸⁶ Diocletian's *Edict on Prices* 8. 3 (ed. M. Giaccherio, *Edictum Diocletiani et collegarum de pretiis rerum venalium in integrum fere restitutum* (etc.) (2 vols., Genoa, 1974).

⁸⁷ Strabo 12. 7. 3.

⁸⁸ For such variety reflecting the concerns of the élite, see Horden and Purcell (n. 7), 262. C. Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind* (Eng. tr. of *La Pensée sauvage* [Paris, 1962], London, 1966), 8 f., stresses the refinement and thoroughness of the Aboriginal, African, and Amerindian vocabulary of plants, though with the purpose of insisting that such systematic knowledge 'cannot relate just to practical purposes . . . animals and plants are not known for their usefulness; they are deemed to be useful . . . because they are first of all known'.

⁸⁹ Strabo 12. 7. 2.

⁹⁰ Diocletian, *Price Edict* 19.38: 'Burrum Laodicenum i[n similitudinem Nervii]'.

⁹¹ *SEG* 17. 632; *ILS* 8379 (Luna marble in Gaul).

⁹² Sisenna, *Hist.* 107; Varro, *De re rust.* 2. 11. 12 (discussing the word); Cic., *Verr.* 2. 1. 95 (in Asia Minor); Pliny, *NH* 5. 143 (tents of Scenite Arabs).

sustain or support the economies of innumerable communities, and it is on a widespread activity, textile production, that I should like to rest my case.⁹³ The entire Anatolian peninsula was capable of supporting sheep and goats.⁹⁴ On the plateau, Strabo remarks, men had grown rich from them; one client king had 300 flocks there,⁹⁵ while Pliny the Elder says that Galatian wool was of the first rank, along with that of Tarentum, Attica, and Miletus.⁹⁶

Women's contribution

Wool and textiles were processed for export from the animals that fed and clothed their owners. I would suggest that the work of women in those processes represented a significant contribution to textile production and trade, for which part of the evidence lies in a type of grave-monument common in second- and third-century Phrygia. They belong to married couples, some of them represented side-by-side; the wife is shown with a mirror and comb, or, more significantly, with a spindle, while the husband may be accompanied by a plough or an open diptych and pen-case; on many other monuments these symbols appear alone.

These spindles may represent more than a token of wifely status, in that they refer to their contribution to the economy of the household and hence to that of the community. Wool of animals kept on the family estate would be spun before being sent for dyeing and weaving in professional workshops. A. H. M. Jones noticed the absence of guilds of carders and spinners, although those of fullers and dyers are well-attested.⁹⁷ A similar suggestion was made independently by S. Pomeroy in a paper on Xenophon's *Oeconomicus* and elaborated in her introduction to that work.⁹⁸ Pomeroy was arguing against M. I. Finley's minimalist view, echoed by Jones on the Roman Empire,⁹⁹ that women's work was for household consumption only. Xenophon elevates

⁹³ For the textile trade, see Horden and Purcell (n. 7), 352–63; they cite the passage of Pausanias (7.21.7) that reveals the place of women in the weaving of flax at Patras.

⁹⁴ Pleket (n. 57), 25–37, arguing for the importance of Laodiceia and Hierapolis.

⁹⁵ Strabo 12.6.1.

⁹⁶ Pliny, *NH* 29. 33.

⁹⁷ Jones (n. 3), 360 f.

⁹⁸ Read to the Oxford Seminar on *Women in Antiquity*, October 1990; see *Xenophon Oeconomicus: a Social and Historical Commentary, with a new English translation* (Oxford, 1994), 42 ff., 58 ff., 247. The significant contribution of women's work was of course not confined to the Greek East: it is attested in Columella's account of farms in the West, and the role of the *villica* there.

⁹⁹ Jones (n. 3), 352.

the status of the housewife, and the aim is for large profits and an increase in the value of the estate. The economic value of the work is not recognized in monetary terms because that would compromise the woman's respectability. Taking conjecture a little further, one might suggest that the writing materials that accompany Phrygian husbands may allude to book-keeping rather than reflecting a naïve pride in literacy.

It would be rash to assume that similar factors applied elsewhere and much later, but Pomeroy was able to point to the Knossos tablets for the value of women's work (they got the same rations as male workers), to the Homeric poems, where Hector's body is ransomed with gifts of garments, and to the law-code of Gortyn in Crete, which provides that after divorce the woman may take half the joint property, to show that the contribution of women to commodity production may be widespread and persistent. In one will from Galatia, a woman was in a position to bequeath a quantity of green wool.¹⁰⁰

The survival of Anatolian trade

All these factors put Asia Minor in a strong position to export its goods overseas. Under the Empire S. Alcock has drawn attention¹⁰¹ to the escalating scale of the economic system within which mainland Greece had come to operate; the kingdoms of Anatolia had always been accustomed to that scale. In the time of the Empire Asia's dealing with the north Balkans may have played its part in causing the notorious drop in civic numbers in Greece proper,¹⁰² and to the marginalizing of Greece. Pliny the Elder's ranking of Galatian wool alongside that of Tarentum seems to imply competition in the same market. If Asia Minor and the Danubian regions are implicated in the decline of mainland Greece it is a powerful argument for the importance of their trade in the economy of the eastern Mediterranean, if not that of the Empire as a whole. By AD 177 men from Asia, including Pergamum and Phrygia, were active in Lugdunum and Vienna when they were caught up in the persecution of Christians. They or their families had gone west as traders or professional men.¹⁰³ One Pergamene, proudly named Attalus, was a Roman citizen; another citizen, Vettius Epagathos, is

¹⁰⁰ *JHS* 4 (1884), 253.

¹⁰¹ Alcock (n. 73), 117.

¹⁰² Alcock (n. 73), 105.

¹⁰³ W. H. C. Frend, *Martyrdom and Persecution in the early Church: a Study of Conflict from the Maccabees to Donatus* (Oxford, 1965), 4.

described as *episemos*, distinguished.¹⁰⁴ Nicomedian merchants are attested at Burdigala (Bordeaux) and among the Helvetii in present-day Switzerland.¹⁰⁵ Less objectionably anecdotal evidence comes from the *Price Edict*, which significantly costs transport from Nicomedia to Alexandria, Rome, Dalmatia, and Phoenicia.¹⁰⁶

How well sustained was the trade of Asia Minor? Problems elsewhere weakened demand and Asia Minor itself suffered damage caused from the mid-second century onward by the horrors graphically catalogued by J. Nollé.¹⁰⁷ Differences between the regions of Asia Minor in the third century may have helped to protect it; two contrasting cases show how light a touch of fate could bring cities up or down and how remote districts, less advanced to begin with, could survive in their old way. Caria and Phrygia are pinpointed by C. Roueché¹⁰⁸ as maintaining prosperity in the mid-third century, when all around were losing theirs. Phrygia's isolation and want of large cities may have helped to keep it stable. But quite the opposite factors were in favourable operation at Perge and Side in Pamphylia. For two decades of the third century, when the Persians were in control of Cilicia and Cappadocia, they became staging posts of the Roman army, supplying it from their hinterland and winning titles and recognition as 'allies of Rome'.

But there is an overall sturdiness as well. It is worth remembering Jones' point¹⁰⁹ that none of the fourth- to sixth-century regulations enforcing hereditary membership of *collegia* was directed at any eastern province. In the mid-fourth-century *Expositio totius Mundi* Cilician wine in quantity is still causing 'other provinces to rejoice' and Pamphylia 'filling other regions with oil'.¹¹⁰ Predictably, one famous Anatolian commodity recurs in the *Expositio*: Galatia is dealing in 'a very large quantity of clothing', and Asia stands out against every province with its 'innumerable cities'. Certainly in pottery the peninsula held its own against African competition. In the mid-third century Çandarlı sigillata from near Pergamum, which reached the Cyrenaican market, gave way to African Red Slip; its successor Phocaean Red Slip took up the rivalry to A.R.S. from the fourth century to the seventh. It reached southern Italy, Portugal, and even Britain, losing Italy only in the seventh century. In the late Empire Constantinople was importing North African pottery,

¹⁰⁴ H. Musurillo, *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs: Texts and Translations* (Oxford, 1972), 67; 65.

¹⁰⁵ *CIL* 13. 625.

¹⁰⁶ Diocletian's *Price Edict* 37. 2, 39, 42, 44, respectively.

¹⁰⁷ J. Nollé, 'Pamphyliche Studien 6-10', *Chiron* 17 (1987), 235 ff., at 254 f.

¹⁰⁸ C. Roueché, 'Rome, Asia, and Aphrodisias in the Third Century', *JRS* 71 (1981), 103 ff.

¹⁰⁹ Jones (n. 3), 49.

¹¹⁰ *Expositio totius Mundi* 39 and 45.

but the merchantmen will have taken something back with them in return. In the seventh century clothes from Constantinople were still being sold off a ship bound for Carthage and Gaul wherever it put in.¹¹¹

Conclusion

General claims about the insignificance of trade in the economy or economies of the Roman Empire need to be modified for particular areas such as Gaul and Asia Minor, where special factors such as geographical position, good communications by sea, river, or road, were added to favourable climatic and soil conditions. In Asia Minor in particular, the early development of sophisticated *poleis* stimulated demand for staples such as clothing and for luxuries, however modest. A neglected factor in these developments is the enterprise of local communities in a peninsula of great diversity; they exploited attractive or curious products of their own districts and based exports on them, at first to neighbours, then as their fame grew, to a wider market. At least in the production of textiles the labour of a neglected half of the population, women, could play a full part without adding to costs of production. Asia Minor, as the evidence suggests, was in an exceptionally strong position to survive the economic difficulties of the third and later centuries.

¹¹¹ *Doctr. Jacobi nuper Baptizati*, *Abh. d. Ges. Gött. Phil.-hist. Kl.*, NF 12, 3 (1910), 90, cited by Jones, 364.